RAJYA SABHA

Tuesday, the 21*st July*, 2009/30 *Asadha*, 1931 *(Saka)*

The House met at eleven of the clock,
MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

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ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Night landing facilities at Dibrugarh and Silchar airports

*241. SHRI SILVIUS CONDPAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state whether Government is considering to extend the night landing facilities at Dibrugarh and Silchar airports because of their locations in the border area of our country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): Night Landing Facilities are already available at Dibrugarh and Silchar Airports.

SHRI SILVIUS CONDPAN: Sir, while thanking the Minister for the answer, I want to ask one supplementary.

May I know from the hon. Minister since when the Night Landing Facilities have been introduced in these two Airports? Why I am asking this is because just in the last winter I happened to be there at both these Airports; on one occasion in Silchar and on another occasion in Dibrugarh. And, I had the experience that because of no night landing facilities, the flights were cancelled. This is what I want to know from the hon. Minister.

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: Sir, I will not have the exact date of commissioning, but I can certainly say that the Silchar Airport Night Landing Facility has been installed about a year ago and the Dibrugarh Airport Night Landing Facility has also been installed around the same time. But in Dibrugarh, basically the Airport is an Air Force Airport and it is only a civil enclave which is being maintained there by the Airports Authority.

SHRI SILVIUS CONDPAN: Sir, the Dibrugarh Airport is not an Air Force Airport, it is a Civil Aviation Airport and I am asking about that Airport only.

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: Sir, we have extended the facilities now. I mean, if the issue is whether the facilities are available or not, the answer is, now they are already available. If the hon. Member would like to know about some issue about the past, he may let me know of any specific issue and I will give him all the information. But the moot question is, whether Dibrugarh and Silchar Airports have Night Landing Facilities or not, the answer is, yes, they have been installed and commissioned; and they are being used.

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA: Sir, Dibrugarh is the nearest Indian Airport towards the Asian countries like China, Thailand, Myanmar, etc. The flying time from Dibrugarh to Bangkok is less than 1 hour 30 minutes and the flying time between Dibrugarh and Myanmar is less than 45 minutes. So, I want to know from the hon. Minister whether there is any planning to introduce international flights between Dibrugarh and Asian countries.

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: Sir, I don't think there is anything that arises out of this question. But, again, as of now, Dibrugarh is not an international Airport. So, we cannot operate flights from there to other countries.

A correction, Sir. I realise, by mistake, I spoke about Silchar being an Airports Authority Airport. I said it by mistake. Dibrugarh is an Airports Authority Airport and Silchar is an Air Force Airport where a civil enclave is there. ..*(Interruptions)*... It is just a correction. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: No second question, please. Thank you. Shrimati Viplove Thakur.

श्रीमती विप्लव ठाकुर : सभापति जी, यह प्रश्न डिब्रूगढ़ का है, परंतु मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहती हूं कि हिल एरिया में, पहाड़ों में जो एयरपोर्ट्स हैं, क्या आप सभी के लिए नाइट लैंडिंग के प्रोविजन का विचार रखते हैं? जैसे कांगड़ा है, शिमला है, कुल्लू है और जहां पहाड़ी एरिया हैं, वहां ऐसा करने का विचार रखते हैं? मैं यह जानना चाहती हूं कि क्या इन जगहों पर आप नाइट लैंडिंग का प्रोविजन कर रहे हैं?

श्री **सभापति** : सवाल स्पेसिफिक है।

श्रीमती विप्लव ठाकुर : सर, सवाल डिब्रूगढ़ का है, परंतु पहाड़ से संबंधित है।

MR. CHAIRMAN: If the Minister wishes to reply, he can do so.

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Member should be happy to know that the Airports Authority of India has taken a principled decision that all Airports in the country where there are civilian flights operating shall have night landing facilities. Most of them have already been completed. The remaining few, including what hon. Member wants to know about some Airports in the hills, Airports shall have night landing facilities in the — I would not say a very long term — short term, medium term.

SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Through you, Sir, I want to know about the Bagdogra airport which is a very important airport. It also covers Bangkok now. It can cover Kathmandu in Nepal and Bangladesh too. But at the Bagdogra airport, there is no night-landing facility. I want to know whether night-landing facility can be introduced at this airport.

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: Bagdogra Airport, Sir, is an Air Force airport and I am sure it has facilities. Therefore, I do not see any reason for this. However, we must all understand that because of the sensitivity of the area — Bagdogra, as you all know, is like the Chicken-neck; very limited air space is available; and it has the hilly terrain around it — flights are not operating usually during evening hours. But that facility *per se* is available and it is an Air Force airport.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No.242.